

Approved For Release 2004/08/04 : CIA-RDP80-01000210007-2
CIA/ONE/STAFF MEM/24-65 RUMANIA AND THE WARSAW PACT

SECRET/NFD JUN 65

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

25 June 1965

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 24-65: (Internal ONE Working Paper --
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: Rumania and the Warsaw Pact

1. Rumania is showing signs of a rapidly growing interest in altering its relations with the Warsaw Pact. 25X1X

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[Redacted]

Chances of such a move in the foreseeable future are probably less than even, but we believe that the possibility exists and should be taken seriously. Certainly the evidence suggests that Bucharest would at least like

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DIA and DOS Reviews Completed

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to leave the Pact, and certainly, if it should do so, the repercussions would transcend the purely local; the world, it need hardly be said, is rarely granted the luxury of ignoring problems in the Balkans.

2. Accordingly, the paper which follows reviews the background of Soviet-Rumanian relations, brings the question of Bucharest's attitude toward the Pact up to date, examines Rumanian timing and motives, and assesses Soviet attitudes and possible reactions.

Background

3. Our knowledge of Rumania's disenchantment with the Warsaw Pact goes back to last fall, and we have the Rumanians themselves to thank for it. At that time, two Rumanian officers told our military attache in Bucharest that their country's participation in the Pact was reluctant and that, if their government had its own way, Rumania would not involve itself in any pacts but would defend only its own frontiers. Gheorghiu Dej told our ambassador much the same thing when he claimed that Rumanian forces were wanted only for the defense of Rumania. He also stated that his primary

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interest in the military was to minimize the expense of maintaining it.*

4. The general thrust of public Rumanian policy is wholly consistent with such private statements. Since at least April 1964, when the Rumanian party issued its so-called declaration of independence and followed this up with a flurry of explicitly anti-Soviet speeches, Bucharest has time and again sought to demonstrate its disagreement with aspects of Soviet policy. Most dramatically, it refused to bend to Soviet pressures to attend the international Communist meeting held in Moscow last March.

5. Gheorghiu Dej's successors lost no time in reaffirming the leadership's determination to protect and expand Rumanian independence. Gheorghiu Dej's death could have provided the leaders with an opportunity to approach problems of concern to the Soviets with greater caution and tact. But, if anything, the new party leader, Ceausescu, has accelerated Dej's independentist policies.

* During the same period, the central press emphasized Rumania's opposition to the concept of power blocs and military alliances, Rumanian officers deliberately snubbed the Soviet military at a Bucharest reception, and the Rumanian government, almost certainly unilaterally, greatly reduced the term of service of conscripts.

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The leadership's interest in Austrian independence and neutrality has been publicly demonstrated and will be further advertised early this fall when Premier Maurer is scheduled to visit Vienna. Its determination to maintain good relations with China has led to a number of good-will gestures, including at least one (in Indonesia) which must have greatly annoyed the Soviets. And its desire to present to the Communist world an image of ideological legitimacy has resulted in the declaration that Rumania is now a full-fledged "Socialist Republic." All of these developments, of course, have implications of concern to the Soviets.

6. Specifically concerning the Warsaw Pact, the Ceausescu regime has indicated its attitude privately by telling our embassy (through a foreign ministry spokesman) that the Soviets had sent an emissary to Bucharest to put pressure on the Rumanians (an apparent reference to the recent visits of Marshal Grechko, of which more later). It has demonstrated its attitude publicly in a speech to army political officers by Ceausescu himself. Speaking on 15 June, Ceausescu, declared that the armed forces are "ready to carry out any mission" and decried "any interference by any state in the internal affairs of another state." Then, in an unusual reference implying a campaign for greater self-reliance,

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Ceausescu stated that the "working class and Rumanian people make sustained efforts for equipping the army, efforts which will continue in the future." Significantly, as our embassy observes, Ceausescu made no mention whatsoever of the Warsaw Pact or even the USSR.*

The Pact Problem

7. This background, together with such specific matters as the regime's intense campaign to de-Russify all aspects of Rumanian culture, serves to point up both the delicacy of relations with the USSR and its own determination to win a significant measure of national sovereignty. In this context, Rumania's unhappiness with close military ties with the USSR becomes in general terms fully understandable. It is more difficult, however, to assess the specifics of present Rumanian intentions concerning the Warsaw Pact.

* Ceausescu made this speech on 15 June. Two days after he spoke, it was revealed that the Rumanian Chief of Staff had been relieved of his duties for reasons not stated. A similar move in Poland several months ago has been attributed to Soviet pressures; the Chief of Staff fired there had apparently been accused of anti-Soviet tendencies. The same is possible in Bucharest, particularly in view of Grechko's visits. But, perhaps more likely, the Rumanians have rid themselves of an officer who was pro-Soviet, or at least inclined to go along with the USSR's proposals for strengthening the Warsaw Pact.

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8. Soviet attitudes toward the Warsaw Pact have changed appreciably over the past few years. One general policy change is to be inferred from Soviet willingness to re-equip Eastern European forces with more modern weapons and to grant the member states some additional say-so within the Pact. This willingness may have been intended in part to respond to the desires of some of the member states, but in the main, it seems to reflect a Soviet decision to give the Pact a greater role in overall strategic plans. Initially conceived as a political counter to Western plans and organizations and as a device to further consolidate Soviet controls in Eastern Europe, the Pact as it now stands more closely resembles a traditional alliance system with both military and political implications.

9. The Rumanians disapprove of the concept of multilateral military alliances and have said so publicly. Their attitude stems from a variety of considerations. In the first instance, they have little incentive to remain within the Pact; unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, which are still preoccupied with the "threat" of West Germany and feel some need for Soviet "protection," Rumania is not faced with a potentially hostile and powerful neighbor (unless it is the USSR itself). Further, unlike at least

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East Germany, Rumania foresees no internal security problem of sufficient scope to require Soviet assistance. Finally, while the Rumanian armed forces are dependent on the USSR for weapons and equipment, the regime probably believes that an alternative supplier (France?) would become available in the event that Soviet sources were cut off. In any case, Bucharest's drive for independence in no way rests on the maintenance of a strong military force.

10. In addition, the Rumanians have a variety of reasons for shunning a supranational organization of the Pact variety. Most important, membership does not accord with their notions of sovereignty and nationalism. Among other things, they almost certainly view the Pact as another Soviet device for insuring Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and as another instrument for bringing pressure to bear on the member states. Indeed, it would be surprising if the Rumanians did not see the Pact in this light; certainly it is at least potentially a more effective instrument of Soviet control than CEMA, which the Rumanians objected to on similar grounds (and successfully so). Further, continued membership does not jibe well with Rumania's efforts to improve its relations with the West, or even to carry on good relations with Communist China. Finally, though of only theoretical

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importance, Rumania's membership could provide the Soviets with a "legal" pretext for military intervention.

Rumanian Intentions

11. Rumania's negative attitude toward the Warsaw Pact, and its apparently increasing willingness to act on the basis of that attitude, raises questions about both the Rumanian mood and Rumanian intentions. Does, for example, Bucharest's current approach reflect a determination to proceed with even more nationalistic policies, a growing alarm over possible Soviet moves against Rumania, or Machiavellian maneuvering calculated to preserve Rumanian autonomy but to avoid undue risk? We are inclined to believe that all three elements are present to one degree or another.

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12. Rumanian intentions may not, of course, be faithfully reflected in reports of Bucharest's interest in withdrawing from the Pact. The Rumanians' emotional and political predisposition to cuddle up to France and De Gaulle may, for example, have moved them to exaggerate both their intentions and their bravado. Perhaps more likely, it could be that the Rumanians are using various channels to issue warnings to the Soviets to refrain from pressure tactics. Bucharest has used such tactics in the past under similar circumstances, viz. notice to Moscow that things could get a lot worse if Soviet "errors" persist.

13. It could also be that what the Rumanians have in mind is not a unilateral Rumanian move at all but at some point in the fairly distant future a voluntary agreement among all Pact members that the Pact organization -- as a result of French departure from NATO -- had served its purpose and could be dissolved. (As a matter of fact, the Warsaw Pact treaty specifies that the Pact will automatically dissolve upon the achievement of true collective security in Europe.) But if the Rumanians are in fact, counting on some form of voluntary disbandment, rather than some specific move of their own, they are almost certainly going to be disappointed. From all indications, Soviet strategy

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does not allow for the dissolution of the Pact, now or in the future. Perhaps what the Rumanians really have in mind in this regard is the gradual development of sufficient Eastern European pressure to force the USSR to disband the Pact, the alternative being the accession of Rumania and some other member states.* But, if so, the distinction between this kind of approach and a purely unilateral Rumanian move is simply that, in contemplating a radical move against the USSR, the Rumanians -- like everyone else -- would like to have some allies.

14. In any case, it seems likely that Rumanian concern over Soviet intentions has become very much stronger in recent months. The Rumanians have been seriously discomfited by the growing harshness of Soviet foreign policy in general, and have probably become highly suspicious of Soviet policies toward the Warsaw Pact in particular. Indeed, there can be little doubt that, partly as a consequence of the Vietnamese crisis, the USSR has of late stepped up its pressure on the Rumanian regime to conform to Bloc policies. Specifically, Rumanian reluctance fully to join the Communist hue and cry against US actions and

* The Rumanians have little reason to count on other Pact members at this time but probably expect support for Rumanian positions to develop over time.

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policies in Vietnam has apparently occasioned private Soviet and North Vietnamese protests to the Rumanian party secretary-general, Ceausescu. Moscow's displeasure has also been expressed openly; Suslov, speaking in neighboring Bulgaria in early June sharply warned against the dangers of national separatism and, almost certainly including Rumania among his targets, cautioned that no socialist state can exist in isolation from the Bloc.

15. Some recent developments affecting the Warsaw Pact have also probably heightened Rumanian anxiety. Ambitious plans for this organization may have been unwrapped by the Soviets at the high level Pact meeting in Warsaw last January; Gheorghiu-Dej was present at that meeting and was said to have resisted some of the Soviet proposals, including one which called for an integrated Pact command over some military units. More recently, in April, growing Soviet interest in the Pact seems to have been demonstrated anew by an unprecedented convocation of Pact defense ministers in the Carpatho-Ukraine.* Precisely what the Soviets have in mind for the Pact is not

* According to the TASS account of this meeting, "tactical exercises" were held, new weapons were demonstrated, and "views on different questions of military development" were exchanged.

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known. But something is apparently in the wind, and whatever that is, the Rumanians are likely to be uneasy about it.

16. The commander of the Warsaw Pact, Marshal Grechko, has recently been in Bucharest, perhaps to press Soviet plans on the reluctant Rumanians. His return, only a few weeks after an earlier visit, suggests that his initial conversations had not been well received. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] there is a plan afoot to station "symbolic units" of the Polish, Czechoslovak, and East German armies on one another's territory. If true, it is conceivable that something similar may be proposed for Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria, a prospect which would greatly agitate at least the Rumanians.* Not only does Bucharest dislike the Hungarians and hold the Bulgars in contempt, it would immediately and instinctively fear that such a plan would merely represent the first step of a scheme to occupy the country with Soviet or satellite forces, in this way to insure permanent Rumanian fidelity to the Bloc and the USSR.

* It is also possible, of course, that the USSR intends only to press such a plan on the strategically more important northern countries. [REDACTED] the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia form the "cornerstone of the Soviet empire; the other Eastern European states (they would no doubt be surprised to learn) are essentially 'in God's hands.'" 25X1C

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17. But Grechko may have been in town to press somewhat less dramatic proposals. There are some signs that Soviets hope to establish a direct Warsaw Pact command relationship under which the national ministries of defense would, in effect, be bypassed. Bucharest reportedly expressed its opposition to this proposal at the January Pact conclave in Warsaw. Grechko might also have discussed a Soviet plan to answer the MLF program with some kind of joint Pact nuclear weapons control system -- he publicly hinted of such a plan in May. Because any such proposal would almost certainly involve Soviet control over nuclear weapons on Rumanian soil, it would be unlikely to appeal to the Rumanians.

18. Still another problem may have added to Rumanian concern -- the particularly sensitive issue of Soviet-controlled Bessarabia. Both Bucharest and Moscow have indirectly expressed their positions on this issue in recent months, the former by citing Marx's defense of the Rumanian claim to the area, the latter by openly discussing the evils of the administration of the area by Rumania when it "occupied" the territory between the two world wars. It has been reported that, in addition, the Soviets have in the last year or so quietly deported great

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numbers of Rumanians still living in Bessarabia to remote areas of the USSR. At a minimum, this issue provides Bucharest with a provocative talking point; at a maximum, it contains within it all the emotional explosiveness of any terra irredenta. In any case, Moscow's willingness to pursue a tough policy in Bessarabia, even to resort to large-scale deportations, would suggest to Bucharest a general hardening of the Soviet line toward Rumania.

Soviet Reactions

19. Moscow almost certainly does not view the current Rumanian attitude toward the Pact with equanimity, as is indicated by the aforementioned visits to Bucharest of Marshal Grechko. But Moscow's ability to alter the Rumanian attitude is probably quite limited. Should Bucharest reduce its participation in the Pact to a purely formal level, refuse to participate in Pact exercises and make only a minimal contribution to Pact forces, Moscow would either have to tacitly acknowledge Rumania's sovereign right to do so, change its plans for the Pact as a whole (as in fact it did for CEMA when faced with comparable Rumanian opposition), or seek somehow to compel the Rumanians to acquiesce in Soviet plans.

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20. The latter would be most difficult to accomplish. The Soviets almost certainly do not possess sufficient assets within the Rumanian party to overthrow the present regime. Nor do they possess a throttlehold on the Rumanian economy. Bucharest is probably in a better position to resist Soviet economic pressures than either China or Yugoslavia were; in any case, a Soviet boycott would almost certainly turn the Rumanians toward the West for help. A withdrawal of Soviet military aid would probably have the same effect. A Soviet bribe, such as a major economic aid program, would also be unlikely to work. The Rumanian leaders are not the sort who would be likely to barter their independence, even were they in great need of outside economic assistance.*

* Aside from their probably genuine nationalist convictions, the Rumanian leaders have deliberately cultivated (and won) important political support on the basis of their independentist program. They would be most reluctant to jeopardize this support by making major compromises with the Soviets.

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21. Ultimately, if all else should fail, the Soviets would have to consider as a last resort the question of military intervention. In broad terms, there is one very telling reason why the Soviets might actually use force in the event that Rumania was, in effect, defecting from the camp (by withdrawing from the Pact or in some other way): to preserve their empire, not only in Rumania but throughout Eastern Europe. A failure to intervene would signal to the other Eastern European states and, indeed, to the world at large, that the USSR had either deliberately decided to let the empire break up or that it was powerless to prevent it.

22. On the other hand, there are also reasons why the USSR would seek to avoid such intervention. The Vietnamese situation or any comparable situation in the future, would have a bearing on Soviet considerations. If the international scene is tense, for example, Moscow might fear that a move against Rumania would raise tensions to an unacceptable level. Further, their commitment in Vietnam might persuade some Soviets that it would be a poor time in which to engage in new adventures on another front, in Eastern Europe or anywhere else. Finally, a Soviet invasion of Rumania, at a time when Moscow was decrying the US "invasion" of Vietnam, would badly damage the USSR's international prestige and perhaps seriously harm their policy toward the underdeveloped areas.

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23. Central to the Soviet consideration would be the question of the effects of Rumania's actions on the other Eastern European states, including Yugoslavia. The nature of the general Soviet dilemma is most clear in this context. An invasion of Rumania would in many respects damage Soviet interests throughout the area and would carry with it at least some risk of trouble elsewhere in the Bloc.

24. The USSR would face a similar problem within the Communist world as a whole. Communist China would denounce Soviet intervention, both because its relations with Rumania are good and might improve, and because the Chinese would welcome the opportunity to point to Soviet perfidy. Yugoslavia, on the opposite end of the Communist ideological spectrum, would be equally -- and more genuinely -- appalled. Belgrade not only would fear an eventual Soviet military move against Yugoslavia, or any other offending Eastern European state, it would also see in jeopardy many of the objectives it has so long sought to obtain: Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement, more flexible Soviet policies in Eastern Europe, and peaceful co-existence in general. The Communist parties of Europe, of both left and right, would also be greatly dismayed, but with added reason -- their political strength would inevitably decline.

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25. Many elements would influence the Soviet attitude, not the least of which would be the degree of unity within the Soviet leadership. Certainly the Rumanian issue would tend to aggravate existing tensions and stimulate new ones at the top; the military might advocate intervention, some politicians would be likely to oppose it. During the Hungarian crisis there was considerable uncertainty within the leadership and a great deal of discord as well. There was also a considerable amount of wishful thinking (by Khrushchev among others), and faced with imminent Rumanian withdrawal, the present leaders would probably try to find some magic "middle way" out of the dilemma. In any case, in a crisis generated by a Rumanian withdrawal from the Pact, the leadership would be faced with a great many pros and cons, and, whatever its decision, it would not be easy to agree on.

Postscript

26. The dilemma posed for the Soviets by a Rumanian withdrawal from the Pact, or even -- short of formal withdrawal -- a Rumanian refusal to cooperate with the Pact, would probably be at least as clear to the Rumanians as to the Soviets. Indeed, the full awareness that it could create such terrible problems for Moscow gives Rumania a certain assurance and courage in its

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pursuit of independence. The Rumanians almost certainly count on a strong Soviet desire to avoid a direct conflict of major interests.

27. Of late, however, Bucharest has some reason to be concerned about just how long it will be able to count on this; the omens are not entirely encouraging. The Rumanians do not know at what precise point the Soviets would be willing to assume the risk of forcing the issue and at what point the Soviets might find Rumanian actions intolerable. Bucharest thus has substantial reason for continuing to behave with some measure of caution. A radical move against the Warsaw Pact does not seem likely unless the Rumanians had good reason to believe that the USSR would not oppose it militarily, or unless the Rumanians were seeking through such an act somehow to forestall Soviet intervention.

28. The Rumanians may not make marvelous soldiers, but their national character -- despite the advent of Communism -- does seem to promote political cunning. When this particular talent is combined with a clear objective, the Rumanians can be formidable adversaries indeed. This, at any rate, would be the likely Soviet testimony.

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